

“Is it right to be indifferent to tragedy in Palestine? ” “Wave of Prayer”

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<Introduction>

May 7, 2021, the last Friday of Islamic religious even Ramadan (fasting month), was the night of the most sacred day called “layla al-qadr”. On that day, Israeli army attacked on the Palestinians. It was the time when tens of thousands of Palestinians were praying at the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, where is the sanctuary of Judaism, Islam and Christianity.

It was built in 699 around the rock where is said that Abraham dedicated his son Isaac. On February 23, 1993, before I became a pastor, I took off my shoes and entered the al-Aqsa Mosque. There was a magnetic field of prayer. It is the origin of justification, “Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.” (Genesis 15:6) There is no law of Moses nor circumcision. There is no confession of faith in Jesus Christ. However, justification means being able to appear before God without having any sins and without any remorse for consciences. Abraham is a model for the people of the Book who believe (πιστεύω *pisteuo*). The Dome of the Rock is also sacred to Judaism. The Israeli government is ignoring the criticisms of the United Nations and international public opinions and is trying to take full control of Jerusalem by sending troops. Although it seems like to be a conflict between religions, Jewish and Islamic leaders are also opposed to these aggressive political methods. What kind of decision should make as a believer who believe the words “for all who draw the sword will die by the sword”?

a. Israel and the United States

The United States attacked Taliban in Afghanistan under the justice’s name of the counter attacks toward the 9/11 terrorism. Parents were killed in the airstrikes. The orphans have no sins. Why did the country called as the state of Christianity expose its cruelty? Under the banner of “Christianity”, instead of seeking the path of “reconciliation”, the reality of destruction, oppression, and prejudice that create a hotbed of terrorism was be confronted. From my age of 26, I had a super-fundamental view of the Bible such as, the Second Coming of Christ was close, the reconstruction the temple in Jerusalem, the Book of Ezekiel chapter 38, the Book of Daniel, and the Millennial Kingdom in Revelation. However, those were collapsed with making a big noise. As a pastor of the Kobe International Christ Church, I was a interpreter of Israeli Ambassador Yitzhak Lior, the Hebrew teacher, and what theology I was teaching at the seminary were evangelicalism. It was a turning point for the sixth years since I had worked hard to form the Brethren church, which has evangelism roots. I was listening to eschatology at Reformed Theological Seminary. My eyes were opened by the book of Paul Johannes Tillich [1886-1965], “Rechtfertigung des Zweiflers”, which preaches “doubt” such as “Is there a god when such evil is forgiven?”

b. “Premillennialism”

Among three Christian groups, the Plymouth Brethren that started from England and Ireland, the Mennonite from Russia, and the Brethren in Japan all share the same dispensation on the Second Coming of Christ and eschatology.

It has a historical view to eschatology that starts from 1948 when Israel was reborn. Exactly 100 years ago, in 1848, John Nelson Darby of the Brethren church raptured and introduced the Second Coming of Christ before the Millennium, that

based on the “Darby’s translation” Bible, which become the source of fundamentalists. Darby was the flag-bearer of the evangelism and the teacher of verbal inspiration. It is no exaggeration to say that he is the creator of an American-born Christian evangelism, the Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It can be said that pacifists such as Uchimura Kanzo, Akashi Jyunzo, and Nakada Jūji [1870-1939] also have the same eschatology. In recent years, based on dualism, even religious discourse of pastor Nakagawa Kenichi who supports former President Trump, require a thoughtful recognition of how to explain the historical position of “Israel” rather than from the perspective of “QAnon”. The idea of excluding the other side as a communist is short-sighted. In the Premillennialism and the Second Coming of Christ, peace is irrelevant to orphans in developing countries suffering from war, hunger, and poverty, single women who have lost her husband, and elderly living alone people. In 2001, I was convinced that “Liberation theology” is the only thing able to shift the perspective from the institutional religious oppressor to the poor.

c. The Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami

On March 11, 2011, the spirit urged me to aim for “Practice in the field rather than talking”. I stood at the scene of a natural disaster where is the very bottom point of crying, “the smallest one”. The battle has begun to face death, to talk with the dead, and not by the gospel of Jesus’s “to bring unity to all things (ἀνακεφαλαιῶ *anakephalaioo* Ephesians 1:10)”, but to show by my way of life. Even though I had no experience, I started to do volunteer for agriculture, forestry, fishery, and listening victims. There was no project called “Kobe International Sustaining Organization”, and a small group without any aid rushed to the disaster affected area and prepared meals. More than 2,000 people have already participated.

If there is one victim who need to recover of hearts, we visit places such as Tohoku Volunteer (119 times), Mashiki (the 2016 Kumamoto earthquakes), Masue (Fukuoka Prefecture), Mabi (Okayama Prefecture), and Atsuma Town (Hokkaido). We pray for the restoration of the natural ecosystem of “Resurrection of Rice Field, Mountain, and Bay”. Action is the prayer. We will stay close to the “place” where forests are abandoned, the sea is polluted with radioactively contaminated water, and the animals and plants are moaning, “We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.” (Romans 8:22) It is not the highly educated person who rush to the site. Not a qualified person either. Not eloquent one. They are poor people who are very unlikely to be clerics. Of those called “street living people (homeless)”, “schizophrenia patient”, “split personality”, “people with depression” and “hikikomori (a person who avoids social contact)” are the center of our “work”. It was the people (Greek *Ochlos*) who followed Jesus. “News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them.” (Matthew 4:24) That is why you can empathize with pain, suffering, anger, and sickness. It has no graduation after three years, but it will continue. We don’t always have enough money. However, our heart is fulfilled. “I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich!” (Revelation 2:9) It is because that it has changed from giving side to the receiving side.

<Conclusion>

God is not the one to despise about terrorism in Palestine and the Middle east. Politicians and leaders that brought war tragedies are not willing to provide education, medical support and welfare to the Palestinian people even in the crisis of COVID-19. It been over 70 years. The unmerciful religious people that have become just prayers to those people must be repented *μετανοέω metanoeo* (Romans 1:31).